

Michigan
Department
of Human
Services

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394

*Story on/re DHS at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Friday, July 14, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

TOPIC	PAGE
DHS budget*	2-3
Family to Family*	4
Nathaniel Abraham*	5-7
Child welfare*	8-10
Miscellaneous	11-16
News release*	17-18

DHS budget clears conference committee

Gongwer News Service

July 13, 2005

The third time was the charm for the conference committee overseeing the Department of Human Services budget – the remaining budget item to be finalized this week – on Thursday. After recessing two times during the afternoon, after rescheduling from Wednesday, the committee reconvened late in the day to finalize SB 1090, ending their work shortly before 7 p.m.

The apparent problem seemed to be over the \$1 million budgetary reduction plan and how that would be implemented by the department, which meant that the Legislative Service Bureau had to rework the bill to reflect those changes.

The bill was amended to include boilerplate language that a \$1 million budgetary savings plan the department will have to undertake would require approval by both appropriations committees through the transfer process. It also was reworded to include \$1 million for the Office of Children and Adult Licensing, which had been accidentally deleted in the budget draft.

That negotiation also brought up questions regarding some other line items, but that apparently did not result in any changes to the agreement.

Rep. Roger Kahn (R-Saginaw Township) also offered an amendment that would have further increased funding for foster care payments above the 5 percent in the budget. His amendment also would have further budgeted for residential private services.

Mr. Kahn said much had been done in a tough budget year, but he felt that the amendment should at least be offered. He then requested that his amendment be withdrawn

Sen. Bill Hardiman (R-Kentwood) said that lawmakers would like to further support residential care, but that sector of foster care will have to come in a later budget.

Overall the budget is \$4.4 billion, of which \$1 billion is in general fund dollars. That's a \$6.9 million increase in general fund spending for the budget over current year appropriations, but the budget also represents a \$4 million cut in total appropriations compared to current year levels.

The budget does not include a 48-month lifetime limit on cash assistance, but does reflect the revised Jobs, Education and Training program proposed by the administration (which show a proposed savings of \$39 million, though that also means hiring additional 146 staff members to implement the program along with some other administrative line items that total \$23.5 million).

The conference adopted additional funding for daycare services, as well as interdepartmental grants for Medicaid transfer look-backs.

Marriage and fatherhood initiatives would further receive additional funding of \$2.7 million.

The budget also includes a shift in general funds to cover reductions in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families funding of \$1.2 million.

“It is a budget that keeps those families and those children in a social safety net,” said Rep. Chris Kolb (D-Ann Arbor)

Conference Chair Rep. Rick Shaffer (R-Three Rivers) said that while welfare reforms had taken up the bulk of discussions throughout the budgetary decision making, that “it’s been a great, long and difficult process,” that everyone was looking forward to seeing a result.

“I think we have an excellent product here considering the amount of money we have,” said Mr. Hardiman (R-Kentwood).

State Family-to-Family sites to serve as national model

Gongwer News Service

July 13, 2006

Wayne and Macomb counties will serve as “anchor” sites for Family-to-Family programs, the Department of Human Services has announced.

The two counties were selected along with 12 others nationwide, out of a list of 50 applicants, by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to be model sites for the implementation of the Family-to-Family approach – which is a collaborative effort with local communities, families and the department as children are transferred into the foster care system.

“This is great news that affirms the direction of our fundamental reforms of the child welfare system in Michigan,” DHS Director Marianne Udow said in a statement. “The field of child welfare has changed dramatically in the past 10 years and continues to change daily. DHS’s top priority of supporting children remains as strong as ever as we look for ways to become more effective in improving outcomes for the families we serve.”

The program has been established in 38 of the state’s 83 counties, with 28 more scheduled to move forward by the end of 2006.

Pat Rideout, senior consultant for the Family-to-Family operations by the foundation, said that it looks forward to continuing its work with the state, and in Wayne and Macomb counties.

Rep. John Stahl (R-North Branch), who chairs the House Family and Children Services Committee, said the Family-to-Family program has proven to be a better placement system for children, though lawmakers are still reviewing whether the program should be codified into law.

The biggest concern, Mr. Stahl said, is that private agencies are not being compensated when they place a child into the Family-to-Family program.

“We have depended on privates and we will more so in the future,” he said. “This really draws on their ability to do (placements).”

“I like the results (of the program), but there are some hiccups.”

Mr. Stahl said lawmakers are still reviewing the program and will move on legislation once they believe it can function on a continual basis.

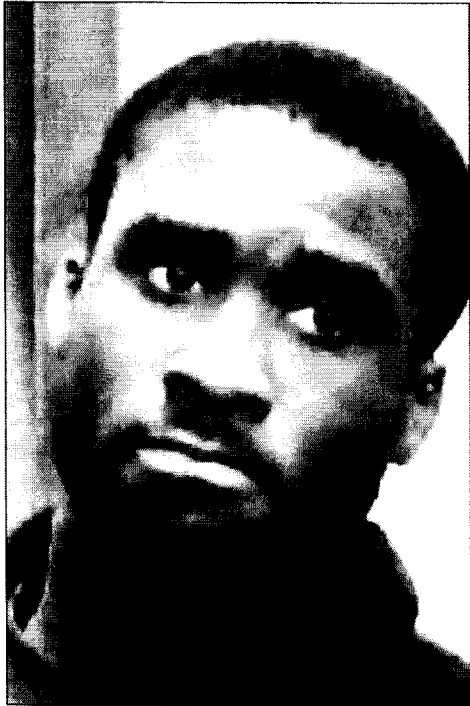
Abraham headed to halfway house today

A killer at 11, he's nearing release

July 14, 2006

BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER



Nathaniel Abraham

Nathaniel Abraham, the young man who as a boy of 11 shot and killed a man outside a Pontiac party store in 1997, is moving into a Bay City halfway house today, bringing him closer to being free of state supervision by early next year.

Abraham, now 20, has completed the treatment programs at both the maximum-security W.J. Maxey Training School near Whitmore Lake, where he'd been held for several years, and at the state Department of Human Services' Nokomis Challenge Center, a medium-security camp near Prudenville, where he has been treated since May.

Deborah Carley, the chief deputy prosecutor in Oakland County who had objected to Abraham's release in a community setting, sounded more optimistic Thursday about the placement.

"I don't want people to panic," Carley said. "I want them to believe that the system has worked." Carley said she plans to drive to Bay City soon to look at the halfway house and surrounding neighborhood for herself.

"I'm hoping that he has learned something from all this effort and all this money has not been ill-spent," she said.

Abraham's attorney, Daniel Bagdade, said no one can yet say whether Abraham will be a responsible, law-abiding adult.

"He's a test case," Bagdade said. "There's nobody that we can compare Nate to. I think we have to put our faith in the system. This is part of the juvenile justice system, and I think it's going to work."

Bagdade said he recently spoke with Abraham and "his attitude is right on; he knows exactly what is expected of him and his whole outlook on things has changed dramatically over the last couple of years."

Using an old .22-caliber rifle, Abraham hid in darkness on Oct. 29, 1997, and fired a shot that hit 18-year-old Ronnie Greene Jr. in the head, killing him instantly. At 11, Abraham was among the youngest people ever charged with murder in a case that could have led to an adult prison.

But Oakland County Probate Court Judge Eugene Moore decided the juvenile justice system should try to work with Abraham. In May, Moore authorized Abraham's "step-down" release to a halfway house so that he could learn to adjust to life in the community. He is expected to attend Delta College while living at the Parmenter House on Fifth Street on Bay City's east side. Abraham will remain under the court's jurisdiction until he turns 21 in January.

Karen Stock, a spokeswoman for DHS, would neither confirm nor deny the change in Abraham's placement.

But she said youths in halfway houses receive individual and family counseling, do community service, hold jobs and go to school. She said the youths always are supervised both inside and outside the halfway house.

Leonard Dixon, director of the DHS Bureau of Juvenile Justice, said several youths convicted of murder have lived for a time in one of five halfway houses across the state.

"They've gone through our step-down process and they've been very successful and have not had any problems at all," Dixon said.

Mary Chambers, 39, said she has lived next door to Parmenter House for five years.

"I've never had any problem," Chambers said. "The way I look at it, it's staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. ... The boys are always polite; in the winter they usually shovel my snow for me."

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or jkresnak@freepress.com

Man who killed at 11 to enter Bay City halfway house today

Bay City Times

Friday, July 14, 2006

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The release to a halfway house of a 20-year-old man, who was 11 when he killed a man with a rifle shot, is a test of the Michigan legal system's handling of juveniles who commit serious crimes, his lawyer and a prosecutor say.

Nathaniel Abraham was convicted of second-degree murder in the 1997 shooting death of Ronnie Lee Greene, 18, outside a convenience store in Pontiac. Though convicted as an adult, he was sentenced as a juvenile and will be freed from all state supervision when he turns 21 on Jan. 19, 2007.

He was scheduled to move into a Bay City halfway house today.

Abraham spent years at W.J. Maxey Training School near Whitmore Lake. Since May, he had been at the state Department of Human Services' Nokomis Challenge Center, a medium-security camp near Prudenville.

"I don't want people to panic," said Oakland County assistant prosecutor Deborah Carley, who earlier objected to plans for Abraham's release. "I want them to believe that the system has worked."

Abraham lawyer Daniel Bagdade said no one knows yet whether Abraham will be a responsible, law-abiding adult.

"He's a test case," Bagdade told the Detroit Free Press. "There's nobody that we can compare Nate to. I think we have to put our faith in the system. This is part of the juvenile justice system, and I think it's going to work."

The case sparked debate on the treatment of juveniles accused of violent crimes. He was the first young person charged with first-degree murder to be prosecuted under a 1997 Michigan law that allowed adult prosecutions of children of any age in serious felony cases.

Separate child safety agency urged

Hearing is 4th on protective actions

July 14, 2006

BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Invoking the name of Ricky Holland, a former foster and adoptive child who was killed in Ingham County last year, Oakland County's chief family court judge and a veteran prosecutor urged a legislative committee on Thursday to break up the state agency responsible for protecting children.

The judge, James Alexander, said a new department should be created that would be focused only on shielding children from abuse and neglect.

"The most important thing that we do as a state is protecting our children," he told the Special Committee on Child Protection during a hearing in Waterford.

The state Department of Human Services, Alexander said, is "too big; it needs more focus, and I honestly believe that we need to have a department in this state that's totally focused on child welfare."

Thursday's hearing was the fourth called by the special committee, which was formed this year to review state policies and actions in the Ricky Holland case to see whether there are ways to improve children's safety.

Ricky's parents, Tim and Lisa Holland, are to stand trial on Sept. 11 in Ingham County on charges of murder and child abuse in the 7-year-old's death last summer.

Margaret Warner, director of the Department of Human Services in Oakland County, attended the hearing and said lawmakers should carefully think through the idea of a separate department. "My concern is that there is such a link between poverty and child welfare that we would kind of lose the easy access to helping meet the basic needs of children and families," Warner said after the hearing.

At the hearing, Oakland's Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Carley endorsed Alexander's idea and also said police should investigate child abuse complaints simultaneously with the Department of Human Services' Child Protective Services.

And Carley said the state Office of the Children's Ombudsman, which investigates child-related complaints against the Department of Human Services, should be moved from control of the executive branch, which also oversees the department, to the legislative branch.

Carley said the Children's Ombudsman should be free to release department records on abused or neglected children. Former Gov. John Engler restricted what the ombudsman's office could release.

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or jkresnak@freepress.com

Mich. child welfare agency pushed

Prosecutor, judge tell committee investigating Ricky's death that new department is necessary.

Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News

Friday, July 14, 2006

WATERFORD TOWNSHIP -- Two top Oakland County law enforcement officials blasted Michigan's child welfare system Thursday and urged lawmakers to create a new department to safeguard kids.

Judge James Alexander, presiding judge in the Family Division of Oakland Circuit Court, and Chief Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Deb Carley testified at a hearing in Waterford of a special legislative committee investigating the death of 7-year-old Ricky Holland of Williamston.

The state Department of Human Services, which oversees welfare, food stamps, Medicaid, adult protective services and other programs, is too big to concentrate on children, Alexander said. "We need a department totally focused on child welfare," Alexander said. "Workers who do these jobs need to be focused completely on children."

Jim Nye, director of field operations for the Human Services Department, said Michigan has made many improvements in protecting children.

In the past three years, reforms have been implemented, including speedier criminal background checks on caregivers and a 24-hour turnaround on investigating complaints of abuse of children 3 years or younger, Nye said.

The state has been criticized for ignoring complaints of child abuse in Ricky's case.

Tim and Lisa Holland will face a murder trial in September. Testimony in their preliminary examination revealed state workers received multiple complaints that Ricky, adopted by the Hollands, was being abused. All of the complaints were determined to be unsubstantiated.

Workers often fail to identify abuse when it occurs, either because they don't have the skills to detect it or they don't take enough time to look, Carley said.

"If a worker says, 'Did you molest your child?' and they say 'no,' then the case is closed," Carley said. "What they say is that this case is unsubstantiated, (but) unsubstantiated does not mean it didn't happen. That's a problem we deal with every day, and it's a problem in every county in this state. I had a case this year with more than 50 unsubstantiated complaints."

The court officials said the state's massive bureaucracy has too few workers, and they are overwhelmed by paperwork and insufficiently trained to handle complex child abuse cases. Carley said records of state investigations into abuse should be open for public scrutiny.

"The greatest injustice done to Ricky Holland was that no one could read every piece of paper on that case," Carley said, noting the prosecutor's office routinely struggles to view state records needed for criminal investigations. "Every case investigated by the department should be open for review."

You can reach Karen Bouffard at (734) 462-2206 or kbouffard@detnews.com

Angel House: Keep local shelter working

A Lansing State Journal editorial

Published July 14, 2006

There are a number of unresolved issues regarding the Angel House emergency shelter for children in Mason.

One thing is crystal clear, though: If the shelter closes, it represents a failure of local and state officials - a failure to put every possible resource in play for abused or neglected children.

The principals in this story, Ingham Probate Judge Richard Garcia and his colleagues on the bench, Ingham County officials and leaders at the state Department of Human Services need to hash out a solution.

Advertisement

The immediate problem at Angel House is not what it offers, but the fact so few are using it. To operate properly, it needs to keep at least 12 of its 15 beds in use. Yet the shelter is only seeing two to four kids per day.

In an LSJ story last week, a child advocate said the problem was that the state DHS's policy of placing children in "family-like" foster care settings immediately had reduced the demand for emergency shelters, such as that offered by Angel House.

That prompted Garcia to intervene. He says he will use his authority to place children at Angel House. That brings in the county, since such direct placements apparently would not qualify for state funding.

Ingham County Commissioner Tina Weatherwax-Grant said Thursday the county wants to work with DHS to allow state-funded placements at Angel House. If that isn't possible, Grant said the county would have to consider its policy options.

This community spent years raising money to build Angel House. To let that commitment slide now doesn't make sense for anyone.

Fewer kids getting federal summer meals

By LIBBY QUAID

AP Food and Farm Writer

Jul 13, 7:41 AM EDT

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Participation in summer meal programs has dropped for seven years running, mainly because those who provide the food are getting entangled in too much government red tape, according to an anti-hunger group.

In a report being released Thursday, the Food Research and Action Center said complicated accounting rules have forced some sponsors out of the programs and scared others away. As evidence, researchers noted that participation is on the rise in states taking part in a pilot program that reduces paperwork and pays more overhead costs.

"Less red tape means more children are fed," said the group's president, Jim Weill. Citing Agriculture Department data, the group said the vast majority of children who qualify aren't getting free meals and snacks from summer programs. Last year, free meals went to 2.8 million children - 18 of every 100 kids who are eligible.

There are other reasons why participation is falling, the report said. Congress cut reimbursement rates 10 years ago, and state budget problems have forced cuts in summer school and local recreation programs, the report said.

The report also found:

- Participation in summer meal programs dropped by 2.7 percent from July 2004 to July 2005 and has dropped for seven consecutive years.
- Participation rose by 4.3 percent in the 13 states included in the pilot program in 2001. The states are Alaska, Arkansas, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas and Wyoming.

Free summer meals come from two programs paid for by the Agriculture Department, which also provides food stamps and school lunches.

The Summer Food Service Program pays for meals and snacks at parks, churches, recreation centers and other places. There are rules for who is eligible - half the kids in an area must already qualify for school meals, or half the kids in a program must qualify.

The other program is the federal school lunch program, which provides breakfast, lunch and snacks to eligible kids in summer school. In many cases, kids who attend during the school year but not in the summer can also get meals.

Last year, six more states were added to the lower paperwork, higher reimbursement pilot program: Colorado, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio and Oregon. The group wants the program expanded nationwide.

"It is time for Congress to make it simpler for groups to offer the meals and time for states to do more to pull down the unused federal funds," Weill said.

On the Net: Food Research and Action Center: <http://www.frac.org>

County starts meth awareness campaign

By: Michael Neary

Monroe News

July 13, 2006 11:06AM

A group connected with the United Way of Monroe County has secured a combination of grants worth more than \$10,000 to begin a methamphetamine awareness campaign - and also to start a substance abuse coalition organizers say will reach beyond methamphetamine use.

Methamphetamine has not yet become a pressing problem in Monroe County, but it is "closing in," according to April Corie, a development co-coordinator for the Active Balanced Community, the service organization funded by the Monroe County United Way which secured the grants. She said the awareness campaign could fend off the problem before it takes root.

She was speaking Wednesday morning to a group of health care, law enforcement and medical officials meeting in the United Way building in Monroe. Several people from service agencies and a man who's recovered from addiction also were present.

All were slated to become part of the new Monroe County Substance Abuse Coalition - a group seeking new members, as well.

Ms. Corie said after the meeting that the availability of grant money for methamphetamine programs helped determine the new coalition's focus on that form of substance abuse. But she and other organizers said methamphetamine use has become a problem in nearby counties, including Livingston and Lenawee.

Michigan State Trooper James Jarrett, one of the coalition's organizers, said funding may be more readily available for methamphetamine programs than other drug prevention programs because of the danger the laboratories pose. They can explode, he explained, and they also create large amounts of hazardous waste.

Three thousand and four hundred dollars will come from Michigan's Office of Drug Control Policy and must be used specifically for methamphetamine projects. Another \$7,000 comes from the Southeast Michigan Community Alliance (SEMCA) and can be used for drug prevention work extending outside of methamphetamine, according to Theresa Webster, prevention services administrator for SEMCA.

Noting some of the initial activities of the new coalition, Ms. Corie said a methamphetamine awareness forum was scheduled to be held at Monroe County Community College Aug. 9 at noon, followed by a variety other presentations throughout the fall. She also mentioned the possibility of placing "awareness ads in movie theaters and on buses."

Those in attendance Wednesday talked about potential presentation strategies.

"I've seen some compelling video from people who have become addicted," said Probate Judge John A. Hohman, suggesting that a short testimonial be added to the presentation.

The group also discussed potential audiences for the presentations - and noted the possibility of carving separate presentations for separate audiences, such as young people who might be tempted to try methamphetamine and parents and teachers who need to watch for warning signs.

Judge Hohman also cautioned: "While it's important that we keep looking at the youth, I don't think our focus should be on the youth." He said as much of 80 percent of drug abuse tended to occur among people at least 21 years old.

Larry Csokasy, director of mental health services at Mercy Memorial Hospital, mentioned another group he felt needed to be reached: pregnant women wrestling with addictions.

"That's a population we really need to impact," he said.

Organizers stressed the need, ultimately, to delve into drug abuse issues other than methamphetamine.

"There's much more than methamphetamine," said Trooper Jarrett, "but methamphetamine is a good way to start (the coalition) out."

Others mentioned the general, longstanding shortage of both drug treatment and drug prevention in the county.

"We go out there and bust them left and right, but what do we do after that? And what do we do before that?" asked Lt. Luke Davis of the Office of Monroe Narcotics Investigation (OMNI).

Shelter battling financial issues, employees looking for paychecks

Friday, July 14, 2006

By Susan J. Demas

Jackson Citizen Patriot

A homeless shelter scrapping to stay afloat is facing a different financial fight -- this time from its workers.

Grace Haven Center, 1040 Francis St., will keep its doors open, thanks to about \$1,200 in funds that flowed in this week, Executive Director Billie Oliver said Thursday.

But some of the shelter's four former telemarketing employees say they're still missing paychecks from June.

"I'm in a situation where I have bills, too, and I can't afford to do volunteer work for (Oliver)," said Mary Renaud, 49, a former center worker from Jackson.

Renaud contends the shelter owes her a week's pay of \$329, but Oliver has refused to cut her a check.

The director, who says she doesn't draw a salary, claims she dipped into her own pocket to meet payroll as the 36-person-capacity shelter faced \$2,500 in past-due bills this week.

The homeless refuge, which has struggled financially since its founding in 1981, was on the verge of a shutdown for the first time. Officials said a sour economy and drought of donations have squeezed the center.

Oliver denies owing the employees money, adding, "I don't appreciate anyone questioning my integrity."

The telemarketers didn't raise any funds, so they didn't earn a paycheck, she explained.

"I don't pay people \$10 an hour to sit on their chair," Oliver said. "People rip off Christ if they can, but they're not going to rip off me."

Donations of \$50 and \$100 rolled into Grace Haven this week, 33 in all. The nonprofit needs another \$1,300 for payroll and water, phone and rubbish bills at its four facilities, Oliver said. For the time being, the center's eight residents still have a place to sleep.

"We take it one day at a time," Oliver said.

Grace Haven's fiscal problems run deep.

The nonprofit needs to raise close to \$70,000 by the end of the year -- more than half of its \$125,000 budget.

Oliver said it's difficult to save up for "unforeseen" expenses, but the shelter's more than 500 donors have always come through.

"The only thing I see us doing differently is to write grants," she said.

Soaring utility costs catch up with needy

Friday, July 14, 2006

By Ted Roelofs

The Grand Rapids Press

Living on a fixed income of less than \$1,200 a month, Wyoming resident Lee Rowley had a choice.

He could buy groceries or pay his gas and electric bills.

Rowley chose food. Earlier this week, his gas and electricity were shut off.

"I guess I'll have to figure out something," said Rowley, 69, a retired furniture worker who rode a bus to the Salvation Army in Grand Rapids on Thursday seeking assistance.

Like many others in West Michigan, Rowley was told he could get help with his electric bill. But the agency's funding for gas bills is gone.

It's a dilemma for scores of local residents, many of whom got help with utility bills in winter. But many agencies ran dry of funds by summer.

Their woes are tied to the sharp increase in the cost of natural gas, which saw the average bill jump by \$60 a month.

That prompted a flood of calls to agencies such as Heart of West Michigan United Way in Grand Rapids, which has fielded more than 4,000 since January.

The calls normally slow down after winter, according to Janine Johnson, vice president of marketing for United Way.

But Johnson said the agency received 965 calls for utility help in June, a 58 percent increase over June 2005. Calls for help from senior citizens jumped 177 percent for the same period.

Those who called for help last fall were referred to agencies such as the Salvation Army or the Area Community Service Employment Council, which tap emergency funds from the Michigan Public Service Commission.

But according to Betty Zylstra, director of Booth Family Services for the Salvation Army, those funds are just about gone.

"We can ration the funds only so much. The gas bills are so much higher that we can't touch them."

Compounding the problem, the utilities stopped their winter protection plan at the end of March. That had allowed low-income customers to make minimum monthly payments equal to 7 percent of their estimated natural gas bill.

But with that protection gone, some customers face bills they simply can't pay. Tim Pietryga, spokesman for Consumers Energy, said gas and electric shutoffs are up about 2 percent statewide over last year.

"They get hit with these huge bills. They can't pay them. We begin to see them shut off now," said Karen Tolan of ACSET. Tolan also is chair of the utility subcommittee for the Kent County Emergency Task Force.

She said her agency got \$132,000 for emergency utility bills.

"We are out of funds, totally," she said.

It's one thing to have your gas shut off in the middle of July, Tolan said. But with temperatures nearing 90, those who lose their electricity suffer.

"That's huge right now, especially going into this hot spell. You can't run a fan."

Tolan said it would be easy, but perhaps misleading, to blame it all on the utilities.

"I don't think we can point a finger at the utilities and say they are the bad guys. As a state, we have to do something."

To avoid these hardships, both winter and summer, Tolan believes Michigan needs to devote more funds and develop a coordinated assistance policy.

"Many states around us have policies to help poor people. Here in Michigan, we haven't adopted those policies yet."

Send e-mail to the author: troelofs@grpress.com



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

Contact: Stepheni Schlinker or Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

Welfare reform pilot program will put people back to work and help Sanilac County families achieve self-sufficiency

July 14, 2006

SANDUSKY – Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) Director Marianne Udow and Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth Director Robert W. Swanson today showcased one of four statewide welfare reform pilot plans in Sanilac County. These pilots will enable more families to achieve self-sufficiency and meet new federal work participation requirements.

“A key part of our economic plan is ensuring that every person in Michigan has the skills they need to get a good job,” said Governor Jennifer M. Granholm. “This program provides that opportunity for thousands of people currently dependent on welfare while saving the state money.”

The welfare reform pilot, called Jobs, Education and Training (JET), was developed jointly by the Michigan Department of Human Services and the Department of Labor & Economic Growth (DLEG) to help welfare recipients become self-sufficient and permanently attached to the labor force.

“The Jobs, Education and Training approach fundamentally changes the way we move families off welfare and toward self-sufficiency,” Udow said. “Instead of telling those on welfare to ‘get a job, any job,’ the program supports them in developing job skills and moving permanently off of the welfare rolls.”

Beginning in September 2004, DHS director Marianne Udow and then-DLEG director David Hollister led a broad-based welfare reform work group that developed a new approach to creating permanent work force status for DHS clients. The JET approach grew out of this work group and the pilot programs were included in the fiscal year 2006 DHS budget. The JET pilot sites are located in Kent, Oakland, Sanilac, and Wayne counties.

“JET brings together a statewide partnership between DLEG, DHS, Michigan Works! agencies and local workforce development boards that will connect individuals to the education and training resources they need to get, keep and advance in the skilled jobs that employers have now,” Robert W. Swanson, director of the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth, said.

The JET pilots:

- Use a thorough up-front assessment and “Family Self-Sufficiency Plan” to tailor supports and services to the individual circumstances of recipient and family.
- Expand educational and training opportunities so clients gain the skills they need to get a good paying job.

-MORE-

- Focus career and technical training opportunities on jobs the Michigan economy has available (e.g., health care, construction).
- Provide supportive services when clients face serious barriers to work, with the goal of reducing/removing those barriers so clients can participate in work or work preparation.
- Provide advocacy and support for those who are making application for Supplemental Security Income.
- Extend post-employment support from 90 days to 180 days to help clients retain jobs and prepare a plan for advancement.

“The DHS welfare reform plan will meet federal work participation requirements within the federal time frame, protect the safety net, and help people become permanently attached to the labor force so they can move their families out of poverty,” said Udow. “We want to get more people working permanently in Michigan – self-sufficiency is better for families, and what is better for families is better for children.”

For more information about the Department of Human Services, go to www.michigan.gov/dhs

For more information about JET go to www.michigan.gov/jet

###